

Biographical Sketches of the Democratic Candidates for the Presidency and Vice Presidency.

JAMES K. POLK, of Tennessee.

Mr. Polk, who is the oldest of ten children, was born in Mecklenburg county, North Carolina, on the second day of November, 1795, and is consequently in the forty-third year of his age. His ancestors, whose original name, Pollock, has, by obvious transposition, assumed its present form, emigrated, more than a century ago, from Ireland, a country from which many of our most distinguished men are proud to derive their origin. They established themselves in Maryland, where some of their descendants still sojourn. The branch of the family from which is sprung the subject of this memoir, removed to the neighborhood of Carlisle, in Pennsylvania, and thence to the western frontier of North Carolina, some time before the commencement of the Revolutionary war. Its connection with that eventful struggle is one of rare distinction. On the twentieth of May, 1775, consequently more than a twelvemonth anterior to the declaration of the Fourth of July, the assembled inhabitants of Mecklenburg county, publicly absolved themselves from their allegiance to the British crown, and issued a formal manifesto of independence, in terms of manly eloquence, which have become as familiar as household words to the American people. Col. Thomas Polk, the prime mover in this act of noble daring, and one of the signers of this first Declaration of Independence, was the great uncle of the present Speaker, who is also connected with the Alexanders, Chairman and Secretary of the famous meeting, as well as with Dr. Ephraim Brevard, the author of the Declaration itself.

Tradition ascribes to Thomas Polk the principal agency in bringing about the Declaration. He appears to have given the notice for the election of the Convention; and (being the colonel of the county) to have superintended the election in each of the militia districts. He had been for a long time engaged in the service of the province as a surveyor, and as a member of the Assembly; and was thus intimately acquainted, not only in Mecklenburg, but in the counties generally. His education had been acquired, not within the classic walls of an English university, but among his own native hills, and amidst the passions and feelings of his countrymen. Dr. Ephraim Brevard, (the author of the Declaration) and Wrightsitt Avery, (the first attorney-general of North Carolina) were men of the highest classical attainments; and contributing their enlightened resources to the shrewd native enthusiasm of Thomas Polk, produced a Declaration at that time unrivalled, not only for the neatness of its style, but for the moral sublimity of its conception.

[James's North Carolina.

Finally, the whole proceedings were read distinctly and audibly, at the court-house door, by Col. Thomas Polk, to a large, respectable and approving assemblage

Mr. Jefferson having, sincerely, no doubt, but upon merely negative grounds, questioned the authenticity of this interesting piece of history, the Legislature of North Carolina, with a becoming pride of patriotism, caused the evidence establishing its validity to be collected in a complete shape, and deposited in the archives of the State. The people of Mecklenburg, almost to a man, stamp Whigs, in the genuine, revolutionary, acceptance of the term, and have been up to the present day, remarkable for their unwavering adherence to the Democratic principles. As an evidence of the sturdy independence which characterizes them, it is often pleasantly observed that, at the last war, they took up arms six months before, and did not lay them down until twelve months after, the Government. In the contest for independence several of Mr. Polk's relatives distinguished themselves, even to the peril of life. To be allied to such a people and lineage, is a fit subject for honorable pride. Liberty does not frown upon the indulgence of a sentiment so natural. She does not reject the heritage of honor, while refusing to add to it, social or political distinctions, subversive of equal rights. The American people have always manifested an affectionate regard for those who bear the name of the heroes or martyrs of the Revolution. They furnish not a proof of the alleged ingratitude of republics.

The father of Mr. Polk was a farmer of unassuming pretensions, but enterprising character. Thrown upon his own resources in early life, he became the architect of his own fortunes. He was a warm supporter of Mr. Jefferson, and through life a firm and consistent Republican. In the autumn of 1806, he removed to Tennessee, where he was among the first pioneers of the fertile valley of Duck river, then a wilderness, but now the most flourishing and populous portion of the State. The magical growth of a country, which was but yesterday redeemed from the sole dominion of nature, is a phenomenon of great moral and political interest, and cannot fail to impress a character of strength and enterprise upon the authors and participators of the wonderful result. How can man languish or halt, when all around him is expanding and advancing, with irrepressible energy? In this region, Mr. Polk still resides, so that he may be said, literally, to have grown with its growth, and strengthened with its strength. Of course, in the infancy of its settlement, the opportunities for instruction could not be great. Notwithstanding this disadvantage—and the still more formidable one of a painful affliction, from which, after

of citizens, who were present, and gave sanction to the business of the day.—Memoir of Rev. Humphrey Hunter.—*Ibid.*

years of suffering, he was finally relieved by a surgical operation—he acquired the elements of a good English education. Apprehending that his constitution had been too much impaired to permit the confinement of study, his father determined, much, however, against the will of the son, to make him a commercial man; and with this view actually placed him with a merchant. Upon what slender threads hang the destinies of life! A little more, and the uncompromising opponent of the Bank of the United States, the Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives, might have been at this day, in spite of his origin and early tendencies, a Whig preacher of panics, uttering *jeremiads* for the fate of that shadowy and intangible thing yclept “Credit system.”

“If shape it might be call'd, that shape had none,
Distinguishable in member, joint or limb;
Or substance might be called, that shadow seem'd
For each seem'd either.”

He remained a few weeks in a situation adverse to his wishes and incompatible with his taste. Finally, his earnest appeals succeeded in overcoming the resistance of his father, and in July 1813, he was placed under the care of the Rev. Dr. Henderson, and subsequently, at the academy of Murfreesborough, Tennessee, then under the direction of Mr. Samuel P. Black, justly celebrated in that region as a classical teacher. In the autumn of 1815, he entered the University of North Carolina, having, in less than two years and a half, thoroughly prepared himself to commence his collegiate course. It will be seen from this hasty sketch, that the history of the Speaker furnishes an interesting example of talent and perseverance triumphing over disheartening difficulties in early life. So frequent are such instances, that it would almost seem that true merit requires the ordeal of adverse circumstances, to strengthen its temper and distinguish it from unsubstantial pretension.

Mr. Polk's career at the University was distinguished. At each semi-annual examination he bore away the first honor, and finally graduated in 1818, with the highest distinction of his class, and with the reputation of being the first scholar in both the mathematics and classics. Of the former science he was passionately fond, though equally distinguished as a linguist. His course at college was marked by the same assiduity and studious application which have since characterized him. His ambition to excel was equalled by his perseverance alone, in proof of which it is said, that he never missed a recitation, nor omitted the punctilious performance of any duty. Habits of close application at college are apt to be despised by those who pride themselves on brilliancy of mind, as they were incompatible. This is a melancholy mistake. Genius has even been defined the faculty of application. The latter is, at least, something better, and more available. So carefully has Mr. Polk avoided the pedantry of classical display, which is the false taste of our day and country, as almost to hide the acquisitions which distinguished his early career. His preference for the useful and substantial, indicated by his youthful passion for the mathematics, has made him select a style of elocution which would, perhaps, be deemed too plain by the shallow admirers of flashy declamation. The worst of all styles is the florid and exaggerated. It is that of minds which are, as it were, overlaid by their acquisitions. They break down beneath a burden which they have not strength to bear—

“Deep vered in books, but shallow in themselves.”

The mind should rather be fertilized by culture than

encumbered with foreign productions. Pedantry is at once the result and proof of intellectualism.

Returning to Tennessee, from the State which is, in two senses, his *alma mater*, with health considerably impaired by excessive application, Mr. Polk, in the beginning of the year 1819, commenced the study of the law in the office of Senator Grundy, and late in 1820 was admitted to the bar. He commenced his professional career in the county of Maury, with great advantages, derived from the connection of his family with its early settlement. To this hour his warmest friends are the sharers of his father's early privations and difficulties, and the associates of his own youth. But his success was due to his personal qualities still more than to extrinsic advantages. A Republican in habits as well as in principles, depending for the maintenance of his dignity upon the esteem of others, and not upon his own assumption, his manners conciliated the general good will. The confidence of his friends was justified by the result. His thorough academical preparation, his accurate knowledge of the law, his readiness and resources in debate, his unwearied application to business, secured him, at once, full employment, and in less than a year he was already a leading practitioner. Such prompt success in a profession where the early stages are proverbially slow and discouraging, falls to the lot of few.

Mr. Polk continued to devote some years exclusively to the laborious prosecution of his profession, with a progressive augmentation of reputation, and the more solid rewards by which it is accompanied. In 1823, he entered upon the stormy career of politics, being chosen to represent his county in the State legislature, by a heavy majority over the former incumbent, but not without formidable opposition. He was, for two successive years, a member of that body, where his ability in debate, and talent for business, at once gave him reputation. The early personal and political friend of General Jackson, he was one of those who, in the session of 1823-'24, called that distinguished man from his retirement, by electing him to the Senate of the United States; and he looks back with pride to the part he took in an act which was followed by such important consequences. In August, 1825, being then in his thirtieth year, Mr. Polk was chosen to represent his district in Congress, and, in the ensuing December, took his seat in that body, where he has remained ever since. He brought with him into the national councils those fundamental principles to which he has adhered through all the personal mutations of party. From his early youth, he was a Republican of the “straitest sect.” He has ever regarded the Constitution of the United States as an instrument of specific and limited powers, and that doctrine is at the very foundation of the Democratic creed. Of course, he has ever been what is termed a strict constructionist, repudiating, above all things, the latitudinarian interpretations of federalism, which tend to the consolidation of all power in the central government. He has signalled his hostility to these usurping doctrines in all their modes. He has always refused his assent to the appropriation of money, by the Federal Government, for what he deems the unconstitutional purpose of constructing works of internal improvement within the States. He took ground early against the constitutionality, as well as expediency, of a National Bank; and in August, 1829, consequently several months before the appearance of General Jackson's first message, announced then his opinions in a published letter to his constituents. He has ever been opposed to an oppressive tariff for protection, and was, at all times, the

strenuous advocate of a reduction of the revenue to the economical wants of the Government. Entertaining these opinions, as we shall have occasion to illustrate, and entering Congress, as he did, at the first session after the election of the younger Adams, he promptly took his stand against the broad and dangerous doctrines developed in the first message of that Chief Magistrate, and was, during the continuance of his administration, firmly and resolutely, but not factiously, opposed to its leading measures.

When Mr. Polk entered Congress, he was, with one or two exceptions, the junior member of that body. But capacity like his could not long remain unnoticed. In consequence of the palpable disregard of the public will manifested in the election by the House of Mr. Adams, together with the means by which it was effected, a proposition was brought forward, and much discussed at the time, to amend the Constitution in such manner as to give the choice of President and Vice President immediately and irreversibly to the people. In favor of this proposition, Mr. Polk made his first speech in Congress, which at once attracted the attention of the country by the force of its reasoning, the copiousness of its research, and the spirit of honest indignation by which it was animated. It was at once seen that his ambition was to distinguish himself by substantial merit, rather than rhetorical display, the rock upon which most young orators split. At the same session, that egregious measure of political Quixotism, the Panama mission, which was proposed in contempt of the sound maxim, to cultivate friendship with all nations, yet engage in entangling alliances with none, gave rise to a very protracted debate in both Houses of Congress. The exploded Federal doctrine was, upon this occasion revived, that, as under the Constitution, the President and Senate exclusively are endowed with the treaty-making faculty, and that of originating and appointing to missions, their acts under that power become the supreme law of the land, nor can the House of Representatives deliberate upon, much less, in the exercise of a sound discretion, refuse, the appropriations necessary to carry them into effect. Against a doctrine so utterly subversive of the rights and powers of the popular branch of Congress, as well as of the fundamental principles of the Democracy, Mr. Polk strenuously protested, embodying his views in a series of resolutions, which produced, in a tangible shape, the doctrines, on this question, of the Republican party of '98. The first of these resolutions which presents the general principle with brevity and force, runs thus: "that it is the constitutional right and duty of the House of Representatives, when called upon for appropriations to defray the expenses of foreign missions, to deliberate on the expediency or inexpediency of such missions, and to determine and act thereon, as in their judgment may seem most conducive to the public good."

From this time Mr. Polk's history is inseparably interwoven with that of the House. He is prominently connected with every important question, and upon every one, as by an unerring instinct of Republicanism, took the soundest and boldest ground. From his entrance into public life, his adherence to the cardinal principle of the Democratic creed has been singularly steadfast. During the whole period of Gen. Jackson's administration, as long as he retained a seat on the floor, he was one of its leading supporters, and at times, and on certain questions of paramount importance, its chief reliance. In the hour of trial he was never found wanting, or from his post. In December, 1827, two years after his entrance in the House, Mr.

Polk was placed on the important committee of Foreign Affairs, and some time after was appointed, in addition, chairman of the Select Committee to which was referred that portion of the President's message calling the attention of Congress to the probable accumulation of a surplus in the Treasury, after the anticipated extinguishment of the National Debt. As the head of this committee he made a lucid report, replete with the soundest doctrines, ably enforced, denying the constitutional power of Congress to collect from the people, for distribution, a surplus beyond the wants of the Government, and maintaining that the revenue should be reduced to the exigencies of the public service.

The session of 1830 will always be distinguished by the death blow which was then given to the unconstitutional system of internal improvements by the General Government. We have ever regarded the Maysville Road Veto as second in importance to none of the acts of Gen. Jackson's energetic administration. It lopped off one of the worst branches of the mis-called American System. Mr. Polk had assailed the bill before its passage with almost solitary energy; and one of his speeches,* in which he discusses the general policy of the "American System" in its triple aspect of high prices for the public lands, to check agricultural emigration to the West, and foster the creation of a manufacturing population, of high duties or taxes for protection, and excessive revenue, and of internal improvements, to spend this revenue in corrupting the country with its own money, should be perused by every one who wishes to arrive at sound views upon a question which has so much agitated the public mind. When the bill was returned by the President unsigned, a storm arose in the House, in the midst of which the veto was attacked by a torrent of passionate declamation, mixed with no small share of personal abuse. To a member from Ohio whose observations partook of the latter character, Mr. Polk replied in an energetic improvisation, vindicating the patriotic resolution of the Chief Magistrate. The friends of States Rights in the House rallied manfully upon the veto. The result was that the bill was rejected, and countless 'log rolling' projects for the expenditures of many millions of the public treasure, which awaited the decision, perished in embryo.

In December, 1832, he was transferred to the Committee of Ways and Means, with which his connection has been so distinguished. At that session the Directors of the Bank of the United States were summoned to Washington, and examined upon oath, before the committee just named. A division of opinion resulted in the presentation of two reports. That of the majority, which admitted that the Bank had exceeded its lawful powers, by interfering with the plan of the Government, to pay off the three per cent. stock, was tame, and unaccompanied by pertinent facts, or elucidating details. Mr. Polk, in behalf of the minority, made a detailed report, communicating all the material circumstances, and presenting conclusions utterly adverse to the institution which had been the subject of inquiry. This arrayed against him the whole bank power, which he was made to feel in a quarter where he had every thing at stake, for upon his return to his district, he found the most formidable opposition mustered against him for his course upon this question. The friends of the United States Bank held a meeting at Nashville to denounce his report. The most unscrupulous misrepres-

*On the Buffalo and New Orleans Road Bill.

sentations were resorted to, in order to prove that he had best eyed the credit of the West, by proclaiming that his countrymen were unworthy of mercantile confidence. The result, however, was, that after a violent contest, Mr. Polk was re-elected by a majority of more than three thousand. Fortunately for the stability of our institutions, the panics which "brighten cities from their prosperity," do not sweep with the same devastating force over the scattered dwellings of the country.

In September, 1833, the President, indignant at the open defiance of law by the Bank of the United States, and the publishing corruption which it practiced, determined upon the bold and salutary measure of the removal of the deposits which was effected in the following month. The act produced much excitement throughout the country, and it was foreseen that a great and doubtful conflict was about to ensue. At such a crisis it became important to have at the head of the Committee of Ways and Means, a man of courage to meet, and firmness to sustain, the formidable shock. Such a man was found in Mr. Polk, and he placed himself equal to the occasion. Congress met, and the conflict proved even fiercer than had been anticipated. The cause of the Bank was supported in the House by such men as Mr. McDuffie, Adams, and Binney, not to mention a host of other names. It is instructive to look back in calmer times to the reign of terror, known as the Panic Session. The Bank, with the whole commerce of the country at its feet, alternately torturing and easing its miserable pensioners as they increased, or relaxed their cries of financial agony; public meetings held in every city, with scarcely the intermission of a day, denouncing the President as a tyrant and the enemy of his country; deputations flocking from the towns to extort from him a reluctant submission; Whig orators traversing the country, and stimulating the passions of excited multitudes, without respect even to the sanctity of the Sabbath; inflammatory memorials poured into Congress from every quarter; the Senate almost decreeing itself into a state of permanent insurrection, and proclaiming that a revolution had already begun; all the business of legislation in both wings of the Capitol postponed to that of agitation and panic; an extraordinary and branding sentence pronounced upon the Chief Magistrate of the nation, in violation of usage and of the Constitution—these features present but a faint picture of the alarm and confusion which prevailed. Consternation had almost seized upon the Republican ranks, thinned by desertion, and harassed by distracting doubts and fears. But the stern resolve of him whose iron arm guided the helm of state, conducted the perilous conflict to a successful issue. Nor should we forget the eminent services of the individual who presided over the Committee of Ways and Means. His coolness, promptitude, and abundant resources were never at fault. His opening speech in vindication of the President's measure, contains all the material facts and reasons on the Republican side of the question, enforced with much power, and illustrated by great search. To this speech almost every member of the Opposition, who spoke upon the question, attempted to reply, but the arguments which its author brought forward to establish the power of the President under the Constitution, as elucidated by contemporaneous or early exposition, to do the act, which had been so boldly denounced as a high-handed and tyrannical usurpation, could neither be refuted nor weakened. Mr. McDuffie, the distinguished leader of the Opposition in this eventful conflict, bore testimony, in

his concluding remarks, to the "boldness and manliness" with which Mr. Polk had assumed the only position which could be judiciously taken. The financial portion of his speech, and that in which he exposed the glaring misdeeds of the Bank, were most efficient. When Mr. McDuffie had concluded the remarks to which we have alluded, a member from Virginia, after a few pertinent observations, demanded the previous question. A more intense excitement was never felt in Congress than at this thrilling moment. The two parties looked at each other for a space in sullen silence, like two armies on the eve of a deadly conflict. The motion of Mr. Mason prevailed; the debate was arrested; and the division proved a triumph and victory for the Republican cause. The Bank then gave up the contest in despair.

The position of the Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, at all times most arduous and responsible one, was doubly so at this session; which will forth an epoch in the political annals of the country. Mr. Polk occupied for the first time Fresh in his organization and the nature of his duties, this committee must be at all times the chief organ of every administration in the House. At this session it was for obvious reasons peculiarly so. To attack it, then, was to strike at the Government; to embarrass its action was to thwart the course of the Administration; extraordinary and indiscriminate opposition was accordingly made to all the appropriation bills. It was avowed in debate, that it was within the scope of legitimate opposition to withhold even the ordinary supplies until the deposits were restored to the Bank of the United States; that this restoration must be made, or revolution ensue. The Bank must triumph, or the wheels of Government be arrested. The people should never forget the perils of a contest in which they were almost constrained to succumb. The recollection should warn them not to build up again a power in the State of such formidable faculties. The tactics which we have just described, threw great additional labor upon the committee; and particularly upon its chairman. Fully apprized of the difficulties he had to encounter, he maintained his post with sleepless vigilance and untiring activity. He was always ready to give the House ample explanations upon every item, however minute, of the various appropriations. He was ever prompt to meet any objections which might be started, and of quick sagacity to detect the artifice to which factious disingenuousness is prone to resort. All the measures of the committee, including those of paramount importance, relating to the Bank and the deposits, were carried in spite of the most intelligent opposition. The true-hearted Republicans who conducted this critical conflict to a successful issue, among whom Mr. Polk occupies a distinguished rank, deserve the lasting gratitude of the country.

Towards the close of the memorable session of 1834 Mr. Speaker Stevenson resigned the chair, as well as his seat in the House. The majority of the Democratic party preferred Mr. Polk as his successor; but in consequence of a division in its ranks, the Opposition to whom his prominent and uncompromising course had rendered him less acceptable, succeeded in electing a gentleman, then a professed friend, but since a decided opponent of the President and his measures. Mr. Polk's defeat produced no change in his course. He remained faithful to his party, and assiduous in the performance of his arduous duties. In December, 1835, he was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, and chosen again in September 1837, after an animated contest. The duties of this difficult situation,

is now conceded, he has discharged with rare fidelity and fairness. In the beginning unusual difficulties were thrown in his way by an animosity which was sometimes carried to an extent that called forth general animadversion. During the first session in which he presided, more appeals were taken from his decisions than had occurred in the whole period since the origin of the Government; but he was uniformly sustained by the House, and by many of his political adversaries. Sangers of all parties, who visit Washington, are struck with the dignity, promptitude, and impartiality with which he presides over the deliberations of the House. It was with great pleasure that we heard, but the other day, an eminent member of the Opposition in the body, hear the same testimony. In discharging the violence with which he had been assailed, Gove passed, at the close of the session in 1837, a unanimous vote of thanks to his presiding officer, from whom it separated with the kindest feelings, and the warmest confidence and friendship. A higher degree of impartiality and good temper could avail the violence of opposition in a station for which his quickness, coolness, and sagacity eminently qualify him.

For public men have pursued a firm and consistent course: thus Mr. Polk. Upon every emergency when the current of popular opinion has tended to one side, he has sternly adhered to the principles of duty, preferring to seek with his principles rather than rise by their abandonment. In 1835, when his was the case after his bank report, in 1835, he maintained the same high position. In 1835, he showed his unalterable purpose not to separate from the Democratic party in the Presidential election. On each of these occasions, the popular excitement, his conduct, would have appalled and driven a timid setting politician. And he being given, his motives had he consulted his own personal and looked to his re-election, although he had regarded others more than principles, he would have yielded his own convictions to the considerations, to be mistaken, of popular opinion. But he looks only at the public good, and in every emergency, he is ready to sacrifice all to the public good.

GEORGE M. DALLAS, of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Dallas was born in the city of Philadelphia on the 19th day of July, 1793. He is the elder son of Alexander J. Dallas, one of the most accomplished advocates and distinguished statesmen that have adorned the legal profession of the United States, sustained in important posts of public trust, the principles and policy of the Republican party. He received the rudiments of his education at a school in Germantown, and afterwards at the Friends Academy in Philadelphia. At the age of 14, he was entered in Princeton College, and continued there until 1810, when he was graduated with the highest honors of his class. He delivered their valedictory address, which is still remembered and adverted to

counsel of noble sentiments, and with a fearlessness characteristic of his whole public course, avowed and persisted in his well-matured determinations. He succeeded in carrying truth home to an enlightened constituency, was sustained by increasing majorities, and is by so strong in the good will of his district, that at the last election no opposition was attempted. Nothing can be more false than the charge of subservience which has been brought against him, in common with the prominent supporters of the late administration. It is true, that despising the cant of *non-partis*, which has ever been the pretext of selfish and treacherous politicians, and convinced that in a popular government nothing can be accomplished by isolated action, he has always acted with his party, as far as principle would justify. Upon most of the prominent measures of the late administration, however, his opinions were not only generally known, but he had actually spoken or voted before the decision of General Jackson was given. He has since, indeed, said all that was most

Mr. Dallas is a ready debater, with a style and manner forcible and impressive. In discussion he has always distinguished by great courtesy, never having been known to indulge in offensive personality, which considering the prominence of his course, and the ardor of his convictions, is no small merit. As a poet of his exemplary assiduity, he is said never to have missed an evening, while occupying a seat on the floor of the House, his name being found upon every list of the day and night. His ambition was to be usefully employed as well as a prominent actor, and accordingly he always performed more than a full share of the active business of legislation. In person he is of middle stature, with a full angular brow, and a quick and penetrating eye. The expression of his countenance is grave, but its serious cast is often relieved by a pleasant smile, indicative of the amity of his

life. He has ever been upright and pure, scrupulous in his private and public conduct, and in his friendship of all who have the advantage of his acquaintance.

On leaving college, Mr. Dallas commenced the study of the law in the office of his father, at Philadelphia, and although in the intervals of that severe study, the more attractive forms of literature and poetry were not unfrequently cultivated, he yet per-

in the college history as a striking example of feeling, eloquence, and taste. Indeed, as a public speaker, he gave early promise of that excellence which has since been displayed in many of the prominent situations to which his talents have elevated him; and a published oration, delivered when he was but sixteen years of age, and preserved in the Port Folio, strikingly attests the maturity of his powers.

severed with unceasing application in making himself a thorough master of the great principles of the profession of which he has since been so distinguished a member. He was admitted to the bar in 1813. Soon after the declaration of war with England, he had enrolled himself in a volunteer corps; and when, in the year 1813, Mr. Gallatin was appointed by President Madison a member of the commission that repaired to St. Petersburg, for the purpose of negotiating a peace under the mediation of the Emperor Alexander, he accompanied that minister as his private and confidential secretary. During a residence of more than a year in Europe, Mr. Dallas had an opportunity of visiting Russia, France, England, Holland, and the Netherlands. While in England, a family connection with Lord Byron brought him into frequent association with that great poet, who then, at twenty-five years of age, was receiving in London the general and enthusiastic admiration which the appearance of his two beautiful poems, the *Giucur* and the *Bride of Abydos*, could not fail to call forth. It was in consequence of a remark of Mr. Dallas, upon the popularity in America of *Child Harold*, and some of his previous poems, that he declared in his journal that these were the first things that ever sounded to his ears like fame; and that popularity in a far and rising country, caused tidings very different from the ephemeral praises of the crowd of fashion then buzzing around him. Through another relative, the humane and eloquent jurist who was then the chief justice of the court of common pleas, it was Mr. Dallas's good fortune to be thrown, not infrequently, into the society of some of those eminent lawyers who have, by the brilliancy of their genius, and devotion to philanthropy, made their profession yet more distinguished than it was in previous days. Romilly, whose beneficence flowed in a current so transparent, copious, and strong; Brougham, with his far-reaching, inquisitive, and undaunted utilitarianism; Mackintosh, who could wisely and kindly apply to the heated actions, and in the busy forums of men, the rules of conduct which he had deduced in the patient reflections of a guileless life—these were men whose society, even transiently enjoyed by one much younger, could not fail to leave impressions equally permanent, useful, and gratifying.

In August, 1814, Mr. Dallas returned to the United States, bearing the despatches from the American commissioners then holding their sessions at Ghent, which announced the prospects little favorable to a speedy peace that are known to have resulted from the earlier conferences with the British envoys. On his arrival, he found his father transferred from the bar of Philadelphia to the head of the Treasury Department—a post requiring, in the complicated state of the finances, and amid the pressing exigencies of the war, all the resources of judgment and talent for which he had been already distinguished, but which he was now destined to display through a brilliant administration of two years, under circumstances and in a manner that secured for him a yet larger share of the applause and confidence of the people of the United States. His son remained with him for a time at Washington, to assist him in the arduous duties of the Treasury, and then returned to Philadelphia, to resume, or rather to commence, the actual practice of his profession—an event that was almost immediately followed by his marriage with an accomplished lady, the daughter of Mr. Nicklin, an eminent merchant of that city.

The death of his father, which occurred shortly after he retired from the administration of the Treasury Department, took from Mr. Dallas, in the outset of his career at the bar, not merely the benefit of professional

assistance seldom equalled, but those kind and endearing associations which could have grown up only in intercourse with one whose genius was not more brilliant than his affections were warm. Self-dependent, however, he applied himself with the more arduous to the practice of the law; and being appointed, in 1817, the deputy of the Attorney General in the city of Philadelphia, he soon gave evidence of that skill in conducting criminal cases which has since always distinguished his occasional attention to that branch of his profession. When, in the following year, charges were introduced into the assembly of Pennsylvania against Governor Findlay, which resulted in a legislative investigation, Mr. Dallas acted as his counsel; and the firmness and ability which he displayed throughout the whole proceeding, placed him at once, by general consent, in a rank in his profession that has seldom been attained by so young an advocate.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the exigencies of a legal life could not withdraw Mr. Dallas from the deepest interest in political topics. Deriving, from the conduct and counsels of his father, and from the associations of his earliest youth, as well as those of later years, a strong attachment to the principles and views of the Democratic party, he had never failed to co-operate with his fellow-citizens in the measures which were calculated to advance them. The more tranquil administration of Mr. Monroe, succeeding to the fierce political conflicts which existed during the war with England, did not present many questions that rallied party controversies on national affairs; but the election of Governor Heister in Pennsylvania had brought the Federal party into power in that State, after a long period of Democratic ascendancy, and no one embarked with more zeal than Mr. Dallas in endeavoring to effect the restoration of the policy which he believed to be essential to a sound and just administration of the affairs of the Commonwealth. These efforts resulted in the triumphant re-election of Governor Shultze, the candidate of the Democratic party.

But while unanimity, followed by success, thus attended the course of his political associates in the State, the elements of division among the Democracy of the Union began to be apparent in regard to the individual who was to succeed Mr. Monroe. Early personal associations, as well as a just appreciation of his distinguished talents, had led Mr. Dallas to unite with a large portion of his political friends in Pennsylvania in a desire that the vote of the State should be given to Mr. Calhoun; and the success with which that statesman had conducted the administration of the War Department for the eight previous years seemed to give a certain pledge, notwithstanding his comparative youth, of the ability he would display in any Executive office to which the voice of his countrymen should call him. When, however, the general sentiment of the Republican party throughout the Union expressed a desire to confer on the venerable patriot who had so long and so faithfully maintained their principles in various posts of civil trust, and so brilliantly augmented the glory of his country in the field of battle, Mr. Dallas, with sentiments towards General Jackson in which the friends of Mr. Calhoun in Pennsylvania at once participated, took the lead in suggesting that the younger candidate should be presented to the American people for the second office, while the united and harmonious voice of the Democratic party should name General Jackson for the Presidential chair. In every measure that resulted from this determination, Mr. Dallas bore a prominent part; the eloquent address in

which the Democratic convention of the State presented their reasons for the course they had adopted, is generally understood to have proceeded from his pen; and when, in November, 1824, the unusually large majority of more than thirty thousand Democratic votes showed the enthusiastic feeling of the people of the State, there were few among them whose zeal had been more honorably and actively displayed than his in producing that gratifying result.

The choice of the House of Representatives having given the Presidency to Mr. Adams, the succeeding four years only contributed to create the yet stronger concentration of public opinion in favor of General Jackson; and when he obtained, in 1828, the suffrages of fifteen States, the majority in Pennsylvania had been increased beyond fifty thousand. It was during this interval, that Mr. Dallas received from the people of his native city an honorable mark of their confidence by an election to the mayoralty; an office which for many years past has, in consequence of the usual ascendancy of the Federal party, been seldom bestowed upon a person of his political opinions. On the election of General Jackson, he was selected by him as the chief representative of the Executive Government of the Union in the same city, by being appointed to the office of District Attorney of the United States. To the same post his father had been appointed by Mr. Jefferson, through the whole of whose administration he continued to fill it, and from that office Mr. Madison called him to the head of the Treasury. His son occupied the post for a much shorter period, but in the two years during which he discharged its duties, several cases of public interest and considerable magnitude gave full scope to his abilities, and contributed their share to his reputation as a professional man, which each year continued to augment.

At length, in the year 1831, a vacancy having occurred in the representation from Pennsylvania in the Senate of the United States, the Legislature selected Mr. Dallas to fill that honorable post. Thus, in entering for the first time a legislative body, he found himself in the highest and most important assembly that exists under the provisions of the American Constitution. A new field was given to his talents as a statesman and an orator. Having at the bar of Philadelphia few equals in forensic eloquence, and being perhaps without a rival, certainly without a superior, at home, on any occasion of public and especially political discussion, he was now required to match himself with men trained by exercise as well as possessed of the distinguished ability, in a scene which forbade the logical precision of a court, and yet could scarcely call forth or permit the animated current of spontaneous declamation, so often successfully indulged in the lesser assemblages of his fellow-citizens. His speeches in the Senate of the United States, throughout the period that he remained there, were heard with attention that gave evidence of his complete success. Those that have been more carefully reported, display on a variety of topics, striking political views; and they abound with passages of animated eloquence. The most interesting subject of general discussion, was that which made the winters of 1832 and 1833 more memorable in our legislative history than any period since the war with England. The principles on which a revision of the tariff of duties was to be made, gave rise, in the former session, to warm and long debates, which, in the following one, led to those that involved the serious question of a right of one or more of the States to nullify a law making such revision on principles that it might regard as contrary to the provisions

of the constitution. On both occasions, Mr. Dallas took part in these debates. On the former, after an eloquent picture of the situation and resources of the United States, he touched with a powerful, but friendly spirit, the various causes to which, independently of the policy of protection generally advocated by the Northern statesman, might be imputed the distresses that were supposed peculiarly to affect and injure the agriculture of the South. Following then the course of general opinion, as well as the declared policy of Pennsylvania, as evinced in the repeated votes of her Legislature, he presented, in a manner not often surpassed in force and clearness, by those who have treated the matter in the same light, the views then entertained on the best mode of adjusting the delicate question, so as to save the South from any real injury, and yet reserve from destruction the labor and pursuits of the Northern and Middle States. When the heightened excitement of the following year produced that gloomy epoch in our fraternal annals, which was marked by serious discussions on the extent of force that the General Government might exert upon the opposing laws of the States, and the consequent actions of her authorities and people, he sustained that power in the Union which he believed to be essential to its preservation, and warranted by the spirit and terms of the contract, but deprecated, in so doing, every measure not clearly necessary for those objects. On all questions appearing to involve any differences of policy or interest among the States, Mr. Dallas appears uniformly to have leaned to that course which he deemed most calculated, even at some sacrifice, to preserve the harmony of the whole.

On the 3d of March, 1833, the term expired for which he had been elected to the Senate. At his own request, his name was withheld from the Legislature as a candidate for re-election. He was desirous to return to the bar, from which such an occupation necessarily withdrew him; and his doing so was speedily followed by his appointment to an office, whose duties, while not unconnected with politics, were far more in accordance with his professional pursuits. He was selected by Governor Wolf as the Attorney General of his native State, and he continued to hold it with increasing reputation, and with a degree of approbation and confidence on the part of the whole community, never exceeded, nor often equalled, until the change in the executive administration of the State, by the election of Governor Ritner, of course induced him to withdraw.

Mr. Dallas had scarcely retired to private life, when he was made the object of one of the most remarkable proceedings that have ever characterized the political course of the party opposed to Democratic principles during any of the intervals of their temporary ascendancy. Under the pretext of inquiring into the character and acts of secret associations, several of the leading members of the Republican party were summoned to Harrisburg in the middle of the winter, and, in defiance of the positive provisions of the constitution of the State, a right was assumed by a committee of the Legislature to investigate their private and social conduct as members of Masonic societies. Of the persons subjected to this strange inquisition, Mr. Dallas was one. He obeyed the summons issued under the apparent sanction of the House of Representatives, and appeared before the committee; but when asked to take the oath by which he was required virtually to acknowledge the right of instituting an inquisition so unheard of, into the private and harmless conduct of himself and his associates, he

refused, in a short but most impressive address, and displayed, in terms that led to the abortive termination of the irreparable edifice, its infidelity, illegality; and **John H. McPherson**, on this occasion, the secret operations that soon ripened to so fatal a result, by which the Bank of the United States was imposed, by treaty and dishonest means, on the people of the United States, and especially of Pennsylvania; State insurrection. He then the aid of his influence and talents to this, in which he remained at Harrisburg, and on his return to Philadelphia, attacked this Democratic brother, in public discussions, to the satisfaction of the masses whose near approach had been carefully concealed. This history of the edifice was a measure, and the a case of which its construction was a body, if not yet a complete in the history of the United States, and the knowledge of its consequences of it, after the States was plunged into the long train of disasters from which it is not yet free, has not been able to make themselves, and in which the interests, extending far beyond their immediate objects, have produced the most deplorable effects on the business, prosperity, and even the character of the American people. Even after the spectacles had been fixed, Mr. Dallas was among those who sought to relieve the community from so fatal a misfortune, by taking advantage of the anti-slavery convention, when the people of the State were to meet, with every attribute of personal ability, not restrained by the constitution of the United States, and of which the assistance was prominently by the words of the people before the action of the State was passed, he called to the consideration of the State, in a noble and eloquent address, the propriety of examining into the grounds that had been penetrated, and relieving the commonwealth, by an edict of that body, from all fraudulent, fraudulent, its rights, and state being taken to protect and in the same individuals concerned in the institution, from an pecuniary loss, and act of murder of American.

The political history of the following winter was marked by the election of Mr. Van Buren to the Presidency, and one of the earliest of his acts was to order to Mr. Dallas the post of Extraordinary Minister, and Minister Plenipotentiary to Russia. In this country he remained till October, 1839. The bulky portion of his official correspondence, while there, that has been made public, is his discussion with Count Neesselrode, relative to the territories and commercial intercourse of the two nations, on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. It develops several points connected with the rights of the respective governments, on those shores, presented with great clearness and interest, and destined, no doubt, at a day not very distant, to become subjects of still more general and minute examination. The claims and rights of the Americans are sustained with great ability and spirit. To those objects of inquiry which, in such a country as Russia, would naturally attract an intelligent mind, Mr. Dallas devoted great attention. Into its history, and a study of the habits, manners, and character of its people, he plunged with a natural enthusiasm, and collected a variety of facts tending to elucidate all these subjects. In a public address, delivered not long after his return to the United States, he sketched, with a vivid and brilliant pen several of these topics; but it is to be hoped that, from the materials he has collected, a work of a more extensive kind may be hereafter given to the public. It is one which is rendered peculiarly interesting from the nature of the friendly relations that have existed, and that circumstances will probably long preserve. He remarked with great truth, in the address referred to, that "such, for more

than half a century, has been the strangeness and perversity of other international pretensions, that the Republic and that Despotism, though widely separated, recognised the wisdom of, closely cementing their mutual amity." The freedom of the seas, the rights of neutrality, the speechless shroud of the flag, were the links of sympathy and confidence, which the forecast of Mr. Jefferson's strategy, directed to these, since added others, springing mainly from a common consciousness that public shroud would seldom if ever be points of enmity, and a geographical relation on opposite flanks of rival and ambitious powers, gives to the declared friendship an efficiency in discouraging assaults on each other's independence, and in securing peace, and independence, to it is but a reasonable necessity which seeks to understand a nation; more likely than any other to be the permanent and practically the United States, and in the opinion of the nation. Since Mr. Dallas's return from Russia, he has devoted himself exclusively to the practice of his profession, and though it is generally understood that not a long after his return, he has been in the cabinet, and tendered to him by Mr. Van Buren, the position, and to his determination to remain in private, that he will be long permitted to do so, we think, unless he shall strenuously resist the wishes and judgment of his fellow-citizens. As to the considerable reputation he has founded in his adherence from early youth to the accepted doctrines of the Republican party on every great national question, he adds admirably of genius, a spotless personal life, and qualities calculated to win the affection and regard of all, who he is called into association, that his native State, seeing him as he does in the highest class of the literature, will scarcely consent that the ripeness of his life shall be withdrawn altogether from her service, and that of the people of the United States. Admiring and all things as he would with certain direction, the most exalted offices that his fellow-citizen bestow, his hopes are certainly his general health, reasonable and just; that none of the accidents which hang upon all human footsteps may withhold him from the honorable discharge of those public trusts which are conferred by the willing suffrages of a free people upon those among them who have been found worthy the most deerving appointment, in always will aid.

In personal appearance and deportment, few can blend more simplicity and dignity, and as a public speaker, his manner is singularly impressive. Though not hasty or unusually rapid, his lively imagination and success in happy illustration give to his speeches, even when least premeditated, an attractive variety, aptness, and ease, and make him one of the most fortunate of orators in occasional addresses to popular bodies, as he has been one of the most successful in scenes requiring the highest talents for debate. To letters he is known to have always been much devoted, as the occupations of an otherwise busy life would permit. His numerous political papers give evidence of an excellent style; and at many years since his occasional contributions in the various branches of elegant literature were found in the publications of the day. If the wish may be fairly indulged, that one whose public life has labored to be so useful, may not be hereafter withdrawn from a participation in public affairs, the hope may be expressed with equal justice, that literature may yet receive from his pen many of those contributions in which genius and taste are brought to illustrate the dictates of a judgment always enlightened, and the nearest sentiments of a generous heart.